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UNCLAS ROME 000435

SIPDIS

STATE FOR IO/EDA, EUR/SE, EUR/WE, NEA/ENA, EA/SEA, OES/IHA
USAID FOR DCHA/OFDA GGOTTLIEB, PMORRIS; GH/KHILL, DCARROLL
AND BZINNER; AFR/MHARVEY, ALOZANO; EGAT A/AA JSMITH;
ANE/ACLEMENTS
USDA FOR OSEC STUMP/PENN/LAMBERT/CAINE, FAS
PETTRIE/HUGHES/CLERKIN, APHIS CLIFFORD/HOFFMAN
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH/USAID
HHS FOR OGHA (STEIGER)
BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER
PARIS FOR GCARNER
USEUCOM FOR ECJ4
VIENNA PASS APHIS
CAIRO PASS APHIS
MILAN PLEASE PASS TO TURIN OFFICE

FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: FAO UPDATE ON ITALY, IRAQ,
BULGARIA AND GREECE

REF: (A) 05 ROME 3949; (B) 05 ROME 3320; (C) 05 ROME 2979;

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(G) 06 ROME 0000; (H) 06 UNROME 0315; (I) 06 UNROME 0430

1. Based on communications today between USMISSION UN Rome staff and Dr. Juan Lubroth, FAO Senior Veterinary Officer, FAO will conduct a press conference on February 14 at 10:30 a.m. The message that will be relayed will include the following:

2. On the Government of Italy's efforts:
-- FAO applauds efforts by the Government of Italy (GoI) to rapidly detect and control the spread of H5N1 in southern Italy. Italian authorities took appropriate measures by gathering samples from twenty-two dead swans on Thursday, February 9; sending the samples to the FAO/OIE reference laboratory, the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie, in Padua where results of the H5N1 strain were confirmed on Friday, February 10; and making a timely and cogent public announcement on Saturday, February 11. Subsequently, on February 12, the Ministry of Health's Emergency Crisis Unit met in Rome and included FAO representatives in this meeting. Italian authorities are currently working to control the movement of poultry in/to the three affected regions. The GoI has not yet asked for FAO technical assistance. FAO is confident that Italian authorities are very capable of handling the situation, as Italy has had recent experience containing outbreaks among commercial poultry caused by other Avian Influenza viral strains, the country has a strong surveillance program, and there is a highly advanced consumer protection system. The Italian Chief Veterinary Officer will participate in the FAO press conference tomorrow and plans to provide an update on his government's efforts.

3. On swan die-offs in Bulgaria and Greece:
FAO has been expecting the reports of dead swans being found along the migratory pathway that stretches from Greece to Southern Italy and up through the Balkans and encouraging surveillance in these regions. For example, the swan death reported in Bulgaria was an extension of that which occurred along the Danube delta last week. Bulgaria is a beneficiary country of the Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) that FAO launched for Eastern Europe. The TCP aims to strengthen the capacity for generating and sharing Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) disease intelligence and using this to mount an emergency preparedness plan to against the introduction of HPAI in the region, specifically in relation to wild birds. FAO recently launched TCPs in Cairo (for North Africa and the Near East), Bamako (for West Africa), Nairobi (for East Africa) and Budapest (for Eastern Europe). FAO has a ceiling of \$400,000 per TCP and is seeking additional donor assistance to expand TCP activities.

4. On poultry culling in Iraq:
Last night, an FAO animal health and protection officer returned to Cairo from Iraq. The officer was in northern Iraq where he assisted in one of the largest government operation to cull poultry. Culling is now very widespread and the FAO officer is working with the Naval Military Research Unit (NAMRU-3) based out of Cairo on monitoring the situation and gathering information. FAO has indicated that Iraq will need between 2-3,000 PPEs. Initial reports from NAMRU-3 indicate that USAID plans to send PPEs while USAID and/or other USG agencies plan to send diagnostic equipment that will look for anti-bodies instead of the

virus. According to Lubroth, it is important that the current strategy focus on detecting the virus now in dead poultry rather than on detecting lingering anti-bodies in live poultry.

15. Russia and Poland have called for a European emergency meeting on Avian Influenza. That meeting is scheduled to take place in Brussels from February 27-28.

16. Earlier, Lubroth made a plea once again for seconded U.S.-trained veterinary/animal health officers for both headquarters and in the field. FAO would like to place an officer in Turkey and in the PRC for six months minimum (Note: for the PRC, FAO specifically has requested retired APHIS staff member Terry Wilson. Mr. Wilson was part of the USG assessment team deployed to Turkey and has been awaiting a USAID contract to conduct work in Africa. If Mr. Wilson will not be contracted by USAID, FAO requested his services. End Note) The organization is currently attempting to recruit Larry Allen from the California Department of Food and Agriculture for an assignment in Rome. USMISSION UN ROME would appreciate a response to previous cables on FAO requests for U.S. seconded officers and technical assistance.

17. USMISSION UN ROME will continue to cover and widely disseminate information on FAO activities to combat and control Avian Influenza.

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